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Chairperson: Mrs. Juul ..... (Norway)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 82 to 97 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson: We shall now continue our thematic discussion on the subject of conventional weapons. Today, we have as guest speaker Ambassador François Rivasseau, President-designate of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

Before we proceed, I should like to remind the First Committee of my intention to adjourn this meeting a bit earlier, in order to accommodate the request made by the Fourth Committee.

I now invite Ambassador Rivasseau to make a statement.

Mr. Rivasseau (Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons): When I first arrived in Geneva, seven years ago, and was first learning about the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), I had one question. Since I have become President-designate, not a single day has gone by when I have not heard that question, which takes the form of something of a joke. People say to me, "You are chairing the Convention on inhumane weapons". But are weapons humane? What are humane weapons? It is difficult to explain, because the CCW is a convention about inhumane weapons. Inhumane weapons were defined by a Mexican ambassador for whom I have great respect as weapons with indiscriminate effects. I am supposed to know whom I am shooting at when I aim at someone. Weapons such as mines are supposed to be indiscriminate in their effects. Weapons having what are called excessive and unnecessary traumatic effects constitute a larger category — those include blinding lasers, incendiary weapons and so on.

I shall now continue in French, using my privilege as a native speaker of French to speak in that language and avail myself of interpretation. But I just wanted to tell the Committee that the Convention on inhumane weapons does not mean that weapons are humane, but that there are weapons that are less or more inhumane than others.

(*spoke in French*)

I would like to say at the outset how pleased I am to be here to speak to the First Committee about the CCW. Given that time is short, I would like briefly to speak about two points. I should first like to introduce the Committee to the CCW regime. I shall not describe it in detail, as the Committee can read about it in books. I would simply like to explain why the CCW regime is unique, how it is specific and how it can

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provide creative solutions that can also be pertinent to the other disarmament topics dealt with in the First Committee. I should then like to speak a bit more precisely about the preparatory phase of the upcoming five-year Review Conference, which will take place at Geneva in less than a month.

As regards my first point, I should like to describe the solutions that the CCW regime could provide to meet a number of disarmament problems that we are all too aware of. At the outset, I would like to say that this is a relatively successful regime that has, to a certain degree succeeded in sidestepping the crisis in the area of disarmament to which some have pointed for a number of years. It is the sole disarmament regime to have produced a legally binding treaty — negotiated, signed and ratified — in the last five years. I would even say that, going back even further, among the bodies that can be considered fully multilateral — the CCW among them — one would have to go back to 1993 and the Chemical Weapons Convention to find a similar treaty to have entered into force. In 1996, the CCW produced Amended Protocol II. In 2001, a decision was taken to amend the Convention to make the CCW also applicable to non-State actors. As a result, Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War will enter into force on 12 November 2006.

What has led to this success? First of all, I think it is because the regime straddles the boundary between disarmament and humanitarian rights. That has also been due to the Convention's sharp focus on the humanitarian dimension, similar to the Ottawa Landmine Convention. The Convention also benefits from people's innate sympathy for humanitarian causes. Moreover, every one of us, not as diplomats but as citizens, has an interest in the Convention, for we know that we could be the victims of indiscriminate and inhumane weapons. The principle of proximity therefore prompts us to be more interested in some causes than in others. That redounds to the benefit of this sort of regime. The synergy between disarmament and humanitarian concerns that is on particular display in the CCW is certainly one of the reasons for the Convention's relative success.

The CCW regime has to do with disarmament both because its work itself involves weapons and because its ultimate concrete goal is to establish bans or limits on the use of certain weapons. The regime also has to do with disarmament by virtue of its methods. The regime is based on consensus and operates on the basis of a five-year review process. That reflects the approach in other disarmament fields — the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) being one example — which includes a preparatory process, annual meetings and a five-year review conference.

However, in many respects the regime also entails international humanitarian law. By its very nature, for instance, the CCW is part of international humanitarian law. But it also has to do with international humanitarian law because of the major involvement of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which was at the centre of the Convention's origins. The ICRC's involvement has been constant — from the Convention's origins to its contents and functioning. The Convention's philosophy is also humanitarian in nature, for it aims at reducing the pointless suffering of both civilians and military personnel.

Perhaps another reason for its success is the fact that the CCW regime is not well known. I would say that, in disarmament as in other fields, to live happily one should live in hiding. In that way one can avoid ideological polarization. This is not a subject that is controversial in the capitals of large developed and underdeveloped countries. Journalists' passions are rarely inflamed for or against it. Lastly — perhaps to the Committee's disappointment — I would say that, as a testament to moderation, we sometimes do our best work when we are least involved. Its success may also be due to the fact that it is little known by virtue — with all due respect — of being based at Geneva and because of the fact that it deals with technical issues.

It may also be that the extremely long and unreadable title of the Convention contributes to its obscurity. That is why we speak of inhumane arms, in order to be understood. There is perhaps one final reason: for 10 years, the regime has been obscured — and for good reason — by the great success of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines. The Ottawa Convention, as we all know, was born from the outcome — considered insufficient by many — of the negotiations on the Amended Protocol II to the CCW. Amended Protocol II did not establish a total ban on anti-personnel mines, but the Ottawa Convention did. The Ottawa Convention was suddenly in the spotlight, which might be an explanation as well for the relative obscurity of the CCW process.

The CCW regime is not well known and perhaps it is better that way. But it is a regime that, as specialists, the Committee should become familiar with as it may sometimes offer ideas and solutions. It should be better studied, in particular because it is an authentically multilateral regime that represents all regions of the world. Many countries with serious security concerns, such as France, India, Pakistan, Cuba, South Africa and the Republic of Korea, among others, are members of the CCW regime. Thus, its results are for universal bodies to consider.

What are the technical recipes of the CCW? The French like that — the language of the chef in the kitchen. What are the useful recipes that I might offer? First, it is a regime that does not necessarily become polarized on the question of its mandate. Substantive negotiations are conducted without ad hoc committees, without special coordinators with a negotiating mandate, without even a negotiating mandate in some cases. If we think of the time lost arguing over a comma on the Shannon Mandate of the fissile material cut-off treaty, or how for 10 years now we have been deadlocked in the Conference on Disarmament on the issue of whether there should be an ad hoc committee or a special coordinator on nuclear weapons in outer space, or other subjects — from that point of view the CCW Convention appears as a breath of fresh air.

We negotiated Protocol V, we concluded it, and it was signed, ratified and entered into force as legally binding, without the shadow of a mandate. There was only a basic and extremely general mandate to study; at some point, States simply realized that it was in their interest to negotiate and complete a protocol. At that time, they did not waste time considering a mandate but went directly into negotiations. That is reassuring, because when we do not subscribe to a mandate or ad hoc committee, States become involved in negotiations with their hands free. They are not tied by the opinions of the International Court of Justice, mandates to negotiate with deadlines and such things. States are free, as in the case of the CCW, to do as they wish. Then they concentrate on substance.

In the conference room I see my friend and accomplice, the coordinator from Brazil on anti-personnel mines. He has no negotiating mandate. Nor did his predecessor have one. At the same time, we may be coming to a time when all States members of the CCW will recognize and will be firmly committed to negotiations. I hope that will be the case one month from now. If we ask the question at that time about a negotiating mandate, I guarantee that we will not spend a lot of time on that issue — if we even get to that question. Because that is not what is essential — what is essential is the substance.

Another point that might be of interest is that the regime is open-ended. There is a framework convention and, according to the needs of the moment, there is the possibility of negotiation or reflection on the subject of the day. For example, today a certain number of States and non-governmental organizations are telling us that cluster munitions is the subject of the day. There is no consensus until now on negotiating that. However, we can still discuss it and the CCW is the only forum that is able to offer a place for such dialogue — in terms of disarmament, universality and consensus. Whereas, you know that in the last week we discussed that topic at length.

The CCW also offers a thermometer and a cooking pot. A specific and interesting rule within the CCW forum is that when there are 18 countries that wish to negotiate or discuss a subject they can go to the United Nations Secretary-General to ask him to convene a meeting or negotiating session on the topic. Concerning cluster munitions, at the moment we are not 18, but six. But if one day there are more, then we might have a discussion or negotiation. That being said, the negotiation must occur based on consensus. Therefore, the formula that includes calling for the holding of a meeting is only used when it is possible to have a consensus, otherwise it is irresponsible and a waste of resources. But sometimes it allows us to advance in a more flexible manner, rather than a system where there must be agreement on each element of procedure.

Finally, concerning that issue, the CCW leaves room for the system of the majority in terms of procedural rules. In general, it is of no interest to use it as we know it will not go anywhere. But it does protect us from sterile procedural discussions. There are very few procedural discussions in the CCW, because we know that if it gets out of hand, we can get them resolved through a vote. That is another interesting feature of the CCW regime.

In order to avoid having to vote on numerous subjects, we have the system of a five-year review. At every five-year conference, we try to establish a programme of work for the next five years that will

allow us to avoid having to resort to the 18 State procedure to ask for a convention. However, that procedure does exist as a safety net.

Now that I have spoken of the advantages of the CCW, I must tell you that it is a regime that has serious flaws. The major technical flaw — that should not be imitated — is that it is too variable in its geometry, as well as the great legal complexity that it entails.

In total, we have eight different legal regimes. One can become a member of the CCW by acceding to just the Convention and two of its Protocols — for example, those on laser weapons and incendiary devices. So one can become a member of the CCW without having had anything to do with the Protocols on explosive remnants of war or mines. Therefore, we have eight regimes: the Convention, five Protocols, one amended Protocol — Amended Protocol II — and the 2001 decision.

Naturally, many of the 100 States parties to the CCW have not acceded to the same things, so States are not at exactly the same level of engagement. There is a good aspect to that: everyone should immediately accede to the CCW, because, in my view, one can do that while being mindful of one's security problems. Moreover, my mission has pleaded for universalization of the Conference. I was mandated to do that during the present session of the General Assembly and to submit a report at the end of the session, next summer. So I will begin right now by saying to members: look at this regime and consider it. It is a useful regime that can yield results without compelling you to compromise your fundamental security interests in an area where you really cannot do that.

But the disadvantage is that it is a complex regime. We need to work on its universalization — this is a major priority — to produce virtually the same result for everyone. That is one of this year's most important objectives. During the preparatory process, we have already seen a comprehensive agreement on universalizing the CCW.

That is what I wanted to say about the regime. I would like to use my remaining five minutes to briefly describe how we envisage a review conference in practice.

First, I would say that we have had a useful and positive preparatory process. For example, compared with the process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we really did a bit better in the preparatory process, because we were able to discuss substance; we agree on the entire procedure and on most of the substance. We will come to the Review Conference — and all those who prepare review conferences know what this is about — with an agenda, a programme of work, the agendas of the agreed subsidiary committees and their programmes of work, the rules of procedure and a complete Bureau, in addition to an ambitious action plan on the agreed universalization. Of course, all of that has been recommended. There has been no final decision; that is up to the Convention. But the States parties have agreed to make a recommendation.

We have already reached agreement on a draft declaration concerning the entry into force of Protocol V and a draft decision on a co-sponsorship programme that would make it possible to finance a number of operations aimed essentially at universalizing the Convention, such as what is occurring with the Ottawa Convention. We have also agreed on a draft outcome declaration, with the entire review process already nearly over. So, as members can see, we are well under way with the Review Conference programme, which proves that the review process was positive. I believe that it is also a useful example to think about.

So what is left for us to do? We still have to do the most important thing: agree on three subjects for the Review Conference and keep the regime alive after the Conference. Out of the three subjects that we will address at the Review Conference, we have a pretty clear vision of where we are going on two. The first is to develop a mechanism to ensure compliance with the Convention. We have an agreement that is nearly complete, on a mechanism to ensure compliance. It will probably be a choice between an amended mechanism and a decision mechanism. But it seems that we are leaning towards a decision mechanism — that is, a mechanism providing for a political decision to strengthen the compliance provisions.

As members know, this subject — compliance with norms and treaties — is not always a matter of consensus. If I hope to achieve a consensus in November, it is because we are trying to work in a cooperative manner and to develop a system of cooperation and assistance aimed at compliance, rather than a legally binding system. But it is an ambitious system that will include the establishment of a pool of

experts and the development of a consultation mechanism.

So will we be in a position to conclude? Will we achieve a consensus on this? I do not know yet. We are well on the way, but we are in the hands of the States parties, and it is impossible to predict where we will end up.

A second issue is the explosive remnants of war. On that issue, we have already concluded Protocol V. So we will be able to present a protocol to member States, the international community and public opinion. The question is whether we will have to continue to work on this issue, and if yes, how.

In that context, some States want us to work on submunitions. A more significant number of States want us to continue some technical work that has already begun within the framework of the current mandate, which makes it possible to try to identify the problems and questions that we will not have resolved through Protocol V from a humanitarian perspective, particularly on submunitions. And then it is also possible that we will decide that that is not enough to justify a particular Conference task and that the work on that issue should stop.

The CCW is not, in fact, a regime of ongoing negotiations. That is also one of its assets. If we believe at any given time that there are no reasonable prospects for achieving something within a reasonable time frame that makes sense to the international community, we stop, we put the project on hold, we pick it up later; it is not a problem. Meanwhile, we can focus on something else, so as not to become mired in certain issues.

So I do not really know where we will be going, especially since the views of States change on this. And here again, we are in the hands of States. The views of States change. As you know, there are public opinion campaigns under way in a number of countries. Therefore, I do not know where we will end up here either. This is also an important issue.

But the issue that will require the most work from us, at least at the technical level, is that of mines other than anti-personnel mines — that is, anti-vehicle mines, to speak clearly and simply. These mines have been the subject of an effort by the CCW community for four years now. A Finnish coordinator, Ambassador Reimaa, submitted a draft protocol last year. Since then, we have been trying — thanks to the Ambassador of Brazil, who is more particularly in charge of this project, this "mission impossible", as they would say in the movies — to conclude a protocol that is both demanding and useful from the humanitarian perspective and that commands a consensus on a particularly difficult topic. I do not know where we will end up here either.

However, on each of these three issues, the Bureau and its members are resolved to work as much as possible and tirelessly until the last minute. That is all that we can promise. After that, will we or will we not be able to deliver the goods? That will depend on the States parties; we are there to serve them — those who want to move forward, as well as those who cannot move forward at a particular time.

One last point: we must think about the future of the regime. What are we going to do after November? There will be life after the Review Conference. That was true in the case of the review conferences on small arms and on the NPT; it will also be true for the CCW. I still do not know — will new subjects emerge? A journalist recently asked me about an issue that the Conference has never examined. Will the older topics that one or two countries have proposed — blinding lasers, for example — be a subject for discussion in the future? Will we step up the work on one of the topics dealt with at the Review Conference because we were not able to finish? Are we going to take a break?

The only thing that has been decided — or, rather, recommended — is that a meeting of the States parties will take place next year. And we are supposed to hold the next review conference. But as can be seen, the framework is still quite empty and we have to fill it.

In conclusion, I would like to say that work in the context of the CCW is very interesting because the exchange is more direct, more frank and less ideological than in other forums.

The Chairperson: I thank Ambassador Rivasseau for his inspiring statement.

It is now my intention to provide the Committee with the opportunity to have an interactive discussion with our panellist by having an informal question and answer session. I will suspend the meeting now in order to continue our discussion in an informal mode.

The meeting was suspended at 3.45 p.m. and resumed at 3.55 p.m.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am making this statement on behalf of the Central American Integration System (SICA), which includes Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, with Mexico as an associate.

Every year, anti-personnel landmines cause the loss of human life, livestock and domestic animals, and prevent fertile land from being used for agriculture. This has a direct impact on the local economy of extensive regions in developing countries. That is why clearing mines in any part of the world is vital to the populations that find themselves close to the places where these mines were planted.

During the conflicts that took place in the Central American region in the 1980s and in early 1990s, thousands of landmines were sown, affecting not only the countries that were experiencing violence, but also countries that did not have internal armed conflicts, such as Honduras and Costa Rica. For this reason, in 1991 our countries requested the assistance of the Organization of American States (OAS) to begin demining operations. The Organization responded with the Assistance Programme for Demining in Central America, funded by donor countries.

This programme is today known as Comprehensive Action against Anti-personnel Mines (AICMA) and has been expanded to other countries in South America. This programme supports mine clearance, offers support to educate the population on risks, grants assistance to victims, works on the socio-economic reintegration of previously mined areas, promotes the establishment of a database and supports the efforts to prohibit the production, use, sale, transfer and stockpiling of landmines. The OAS has managed to increase the demining ability of the affected countries, channelling international funds, equipment and training personnel to the affected regions. Spain was and is an important contributor to this process, assistance for which I express my gratitude on behalf of these countries.

Mexico, also committed to the stability in the Central American region, has supported demining efforts in the region and, in particular, has provided assistance and rehabilitation to the victims. Likewise, the Dominican Republic, a country that has never been affected by the scourge of landmines, has always expressed its solidarity with the countries of the region that have suffered from the effects of this problem, supporting cooperation and assistance in demining matters.

The will of our country to eradicate these deadly devices from our region and from the rest of the world has been manifested in many ways. One of them was our ratification, along with all SICA countries, of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We took part in meetings of States members of this Convention where we shared our experiences and have also participated in and hosted other international meetings where we raised this issue. Likewise, we have provided assistance to mine clearance operations in other parts of the world, thus reciprocating, at least in part, the cooperation that the international community has afforded us in demining our territories. We should point out that none of our countries has been or is a producer of anti-personnel landmines, and we have never exported these devices to other States.

I refer now to some of the achievements in the countries which I represent and which have been affected by this scourge. The first States that were involved in the formerly named Assistance Programme for Demining in Central America were Costa Rica and Honduras, countries which, though they did not have armed conflict on their territories, were affected, as I said earlier, by anti-personnel mines that were laid in their border areas. Costa Rica was declared a mine-free territory in December 2002, and Honduras in October 2004. For its part, Belize was declared a mine-free area in January of that year and introduced legislation to implement the Ottawa Convention. At the end of 2005, Guatemala declared that it had completely cleared all known areas of anti-personnel landmines. However, it decided to maintain a small demining unit in order to provide a timely and swift response to future reports by the population on the location of possible mines or explosive devices.

El Salvador faced a serious problem in parts of its territory resulting from mines and explosive devices planted during the armed conflict that took place between 1980 and 1992. It was estimated at the end of the war that there were 20,000 landmines in 425 mined camps that covered an area of 436 square kilometres.

Today, El Salvador has also been declared a mine-free territory.

The problem of landmines in Nicaragua was a result of the armed conflict which plagued its inhabitants from 1981 to 1990. In the early 1990s, more than half a million Nicaraguans lived within five kilometres of mined areas, which contained more than 135,000 registered landmines. A significant number of mines uncovered in recent years, and delays in operations due to difficult access to the territory where they are located, has led Nicaragua to defer on several occasions the estimated date to complete the demining of its entire territory. It is currently projected that the demining operations could conclude in 2007.

As members of the First Committee know, 4 April of each year has been proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 60/97 as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. Within this framework, we are pleased to report that the seventh Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas, which took place in Managua from 1 to 5 October 2006, agreed on the establishment of an international humanitarian mine removal training centre, which will be located in Nicaragua, a country which has the facilities, equipment and the necessary human resources. The centre will have an initial budget of $4 million, which could increase with contributions from donor countries. With this centre, the Nicaraguan authorities hope to show their gratitude to the international community for the assistance Nicaragua received and continues to receive in the demining of its territory.

To conclude, our countries believe that demining operations are essential for our efforts to strengthen peace in our region. We are resolutely in favour of making the American continent a mine-free zone and will continue working to do so, under the leadership of the United Nations, in order to help achieve the objectives of the international community in this area.

Ms. Kagosha (Kenya): The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to be the cause of millions of deaths in the world today, particularly in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa. Development and security are further impeded by the irresponsible use of small arms and light weapons.

Kenya has exerted great efforts in establishing a comprehensive and sustainable regime to prevent, reduce and combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. These include developing a national action plan, drafting a national policy, setting up provincial and district task forces, destroying illicit arms, strengthening the national coordinating structure and ensuring participation of civil society in all processes.

At the regional level, Kenya, together with 10 other countries, is signatory to the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. Kenya also signed a joint disarmament initiative with Uganda in 2005 to facilitate disarmament of the pastoral communities along our common border.

Kenya's efforts in seeking sustainable solutions to the conflicts in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa are never-ending. These include the successful negotiation and consequent formation of a Transitional National Government in Somalia and the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan.

Despite these efforts, Kenya continues to bear the brunt of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Currently, we are faced with the great challenge of a large influx of refugees from Somalia, which has been aggravated by the irresponsible use of small arms and light weapons.

We therefore acknowledge the urgent need for an international code to control arms trading, as arms transfers transcend States and regions. Such an agreement will ensure that standards for arms control are applied universally, thereby leading to the safety of our peoples, international peace and security, respect for the rule of law and sustainable development for all.

Kenya is greatly encouraged by the wide support for the draft resolution entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms" (A/C.1/61/L.55), and we strongly urge all States to support this initiative.

Mr. Mine (Japan): The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted by consensus in 2001, is a comprehensive normative guideline to be followed by the entire international community. In the five years since its adoption, the Programme of Action has demonstrated

its effectiveness, and we have much to be proud of, with measurable progress in tackling this problem at the national, regional and global levels. Furthermore, civil society has taken significant actions to supplement governmental activities.

Let me cite some major achievements in the implementation of the Programme of Action. First, an International Instrument on marking and tracing has been adopted. This Instrument, negotiated and concluded among all Member States under the Programme of Action in order to address a specific issue in the field of small arms and light weapons, is a highly significant milestone in our efforts. Regardless of whether the Instrument is legally binding or politically binding, what is important for the international community is to faithfully implement all the measures agreed in the Instrument, which is required for a successful conclusion to our efforts to tackle the problem of small arms and light weapons.

Secondly, the Group of Governmental Experts on illicit brokering begins its deliberations in November, after this Committee's meetings. This is also a very important issue, which is being taken up in the follow-up section of the Programme of Action, alongside the tracing issue. Major outstanding matters — for example, those related to the scope, licensing problem and extraterritorial jurisdiction — will be discussed in the course of the Group's deliberations.

Thirdly, the growing rate at which national reports are being submitted, as well as the increase in the number of national points of contact, deserves special mention. Coordination among the internal agencies concerned is indispensable if we are to effectively address the problem of small arms and light weapons. Furthermore, international cooperation through information-sharing among countries is also essential if the concerted efforts of the international community in this area are to succeed. In the light of that, Japan continues to encourage those countries which have not yet done so to submit a national report and to establish or designate a national point of contact.

Fourthly, the growing awareness of the need to address demand factors in tackling the problem of small arms and light weapons is also an important aspect to be considered. The Programme of Action itself stresses the urgent need to combat this problem from the both the supply and demand perspectives. We should continue the endeavour to address demand factors through best practices and lessons learned on the basis of deliberations during the special session at the Review Conference this summer.

I am very proud that Japan has contributed to that progress through its work on the draft resolution on small arms and light weapons, which lays out a clear road map for global efforts. It was not our expectation that no final document would come out of the Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action. However, it is Japan's position that the outcome was not necessarily negative. We did conduct a very good exchange of views, as well as discussions on the implementation of the Programme of Action, through the negotiations on the draft outcome document, and drew the special attention of the international community to the issue by placing the problem of small arms and light weapons on the front burner of disarmament, as Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, said. We can therefore say that the Conference was for the most part successful.

We should continue to make such efforts within the framework of the United Nations. Japan believes that these efforts should be pursued in parallel with efforts at the regional and national levels in order to effectively tackle this problem. Again this year, Japan, together with Colombia and South Africa, has presented a draft resolution entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects" (A/C.1/61/L.15). An in-depth introduction of the draft resolution will be made by the representative of South Africa. I will therefore limit myself to pointing out that the continuation of our efforts in the context of the United Nations framework is one of the essential points in this year's draft resolution. We sincerely hope that we will receive the support and cooperation of all member States with a view to the consensus adoption of the draft resolution, as we believe that it offers an effective approach to resolving the problem.

While the inclusion of the issue of transparency in armaments in the draft resolution on small arms and light weapons still requires careful consideration in the light of the existence of a specific draft resolution on this matter and the difference in the scope of each draft resolution, our efforts to strengthen confidence-building measures through improved transparency should also be continued.

Certainly, enhancing openness and transparency in armaments is conducive to the prevention of an arms race and excessive arms build-ups, and the issue of transparency in armaments must therefore be recognized as being critically important for the promotion of international disarmament. When the issue of transparency in armaments is brought up for consideration, the contribution of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms can by no means be discounted. The principle was established by the draft resolution on transparency in armaments submitted to the General Assembly in 1991 by Japan, in cooperation with the former European Community. In recent years, more than 110 countries have registered every year, and as of 2004, 170 countries had registered at least once. The fact that so many United Nations Member States participate in the Register is a good indication that the idea that greater mutual security can be achieved through improved transparency in armaments is gradually taking hold.

The meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Conventional Arms Register, the most recent of which was held this year, have steadily generated a great number of welcome accomplishments. The inclusion of man-portable air-defence systems as a new subcategory under "Missiles and missile launchers", and the agreement on a standardized reporting form for small arms and light weapons, are just a couple of recent examples of those accomplishments.

In this manner, through its ongoing review, the reliability of the Register as a confidence-building measure is being improved. Furthermore, while welcoming the steady increase in the number of participating countries, we must continue to strive for the universalization of the Register. Given that the Register is a confidence-building measure, we must literally build confidence through the ongoing involvement of all United Nations Member States.

This year within the Conference on Disarmament we also had effective, in-depth deliberations on transparency in armaments in the framework of a structured debate. We are very pleased about that because, although the issue of transparency in armaments has been on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, over the past few years there have been no substantial discussions on the subject. Japan believes that cooperation between the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament in the field of transparency in armaments should be strengthened. The activities of the Conference on Disarmament this year provided a good basis for such cooperation. The first and most important step to that end is to seriously study and follow the ongoing activities carried out at the national, regional and global levels, and to identify problems which require further action. Furthermore, the establishment in future of a feedback mechanism on the achievements of each forum would be extremely helpful in the accomplishment of our objectives.

Efforts towards the creation of an arms trade treaty within the United Nations framework should also be given due attention. A draft resolution (A/C.1/61/L.55) on an arms trade treaty has been submitted to the Committee by like-minded countries, including Japan. Recognizing that there is no common international standard in arms trading, the proposal for an arms trade treaty aims to reduce unregulated and irresponsible weapons transfers. Indeed, ensuring the responsible transfer of arms through an arms trade treaty, and registering arms in accordance with the United Nations Register, are mutually reinforcing measures, contributing to the strengthening of confidence-building and thus enhancing both global and regional security. Against that backdrop, Japan believes that a legally binding instrument on the arms trade should be pursued for the consolidation of global peace and security.

Japan does not, in principle, export arms to other countries, in accordance with its relevant domestic laws as well as its Three Principles on Arms Export, and believes that the international community should make further efforts to effectively regulate the transfer of conventional weapons by establishing a well-defined set of principles. Japan is prepared to make constructive contributions to such efforts.

Mr. Streuli (Switzerland): Switzerland would like take this opportunity to focus briefly on four main issues: the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; draft resolution (A/C.1/61/L.55), "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms"; the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms; and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).

First, Switzerland attaches great importance to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. My delegation supports a follow-up process at the global level. A biennial meeting convened no later than 2008, as referred to the current draft of the respective draft resolution, is of the utmost importance for my delegation.

Switzerland has constantly underlined the importance of taking into account the negative effects on development of armed violence. We organized in Geneva a ministerial summit on armed violence and development on 7 June 2006. Forty-two countries were represented, and adopted the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. Since its adoption, the Geneva Declaration has received support from numerous other States. We see that as an indication of the growing relevance of the issue to the international community. The principles adopted in the Geneva Declaration need to be transformed into concrete measures. To that end, a core group of 10 States is about to be constituted under the coordination of my country. My Government intends to act on three levels.

First, on the diplomatic level, we encourage other States to join the Declaration. Secondly, on the research and knowledge-building level, the linkages between armed violence and development need to be properly addressed. Thirdly, we need to integrate the issue of armed violence into development programmes, both by donor and recipient countries.

With regard to an arms trade treaty, Swiss arms control and disarmament policy seeks, inter alia, to promote predictability, openness, transparency and stability, as well as to bring the transfer of conventional arms under control through the application of mutually agreed principles and agreements. With regard to the draft resolution on an arms trade treaty, I can be brief. Switzerland, as a co-sponsor of the draft resolution, is prepared to contribute substantively towards an arms trade treaty. We strongly support an international legally binding instrument that establishes common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. We are convinced that the United Nations is the appropriate framework for such work. Switzerland therefore supports the establishment of a group of governmental experts to commence work in 2008, as proposed in the current draft resolution.

With regard to the Register of Conventional Arms, Switzerland has long taken a keen interest in the question of transparency in armaments. It constitutes an important factor for building confidence and security among States. My country supported the establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and has been actively participating in it since the beginning of its operations, in 1993. This year's Group of Governmental Experts, in which my country participated, was able to reach a consensus on a final report containing a number of improvements to the Register. We are particularly pleased with the agreed standardized reporting form for international transfers of small arms and light weapons as part of additional background information.

Despite relatively high reporting levels, the Group also noted that the existing scope of the Register is perceived to be more relevant to the security concerns of States in some regions than in other regions. Switzerland therefore advocates the inclusion of small arms and light weapons as an eighth category. Nevertheless, Switzerland still believes that the Register's increased relevance would also produce incentives for greater participation. Switzerland fully supports the Netherlands draft resolution on transparency in armaments, which endorses the consensus recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts. We call upon all Member States to actively participate in the Register.

My last point pertains to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). We attach great importance to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and its five annexed Protocols. Ten years ago, a majority of States parties agreed to convene a first conference to consider proposals to amendment the Convention. Today, we welcome the fact that States parties have succeeded in making the Convention a dynamic instrument capable of continuous adaptation to the development of conventional weapons used in modern warfare. Indeed, since 1996 States parties have continued to find a balance between humanitarian concerns and military necessities by banning, in particular, blinding laser weapons, incendiary weapons in certain circumstances and providing measures to reduce the harmful effects of explosive remnants of war. Switzerland believes that the spirit of those efforts should inspire our reflections

on all issues in the run-up to the upcoming third Review Conference in Geneva.

Although Switzerland has already ratified Protocol V, my delegation is of the opinion that the negative humanitarian effects caused during and after an armed conflict by the use of certain types of munitions, including sub-munitions and cluster bombs, is still unacceptable. Indeed, some interpretations of general rules of existing humanitarian law are too broad to effectively regulate the use of such munitions. We believe that both broader and more concrete measures, including of a preventive technical nature, are necessary. Switzerland therefore supports a mandate for the negotiation of a new legally binding protocol to the CCW aimed at reducing the impact during and after hostilities of the use of such munitions on civilian populations.

Finally, regarding mines other than anti-personnel mines, we are of the view that a new protocol on this matter would have added value for the Convention only if it were to contain norms that strengthen existing international humanitarian law, in particular Amended Protocol II.

Ms. Syed (Norway): Conventional weapons have a legitimate role in strategies to defend States. They also have a heavy impact upon individuals, humanitarian situations and human rights. Some weapons have humanitarian consequences that are not acceptable, or not in conformity with international humanitarian law. A constant flow of illicit weapons has become an often-seen feature of conflicts, regardless of whether sanctions are in place or not. That constitutes a major challenge to both security and development. We must address those problems by also focusing on how to enhance security for individual women, men and children and their communities, not only States. Those are chief concerns for Norway. The First Committee must seize the opportunities before it to take crucial action that will make a real difference for people.

First, Norway is in favour of the Committee's taking of decisive steps towards an arms trade treaty. In our view, the need for such a treaty has been firmly established. Although my delegation is ready to start negotiations now, we realize that several preparatory steps are required. We are pleased to co-sponsor and support the draft resolution put forth by Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan, Kenya and the United Kingdom. We hope that concrete work on an arms trade treaty can start soon.

Secondly, Norway places great emphasis on implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Norway strongly favours the holding of biennial meetings of States parties to the Programme of Action, as well as activities to oversee the implementation of the international instrument on marking and tracing. We consider the omnibus draft resolution put forward by South Africa, Colombia and Japan as the prime vehicle to take concrete steps in that regard. Furthermore, we hope for a strong outcome to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on illicit brokering.

Thirdly, to have real impact, measures to regulate the flow of conventional weapons must include the issue of ammunition. To rectify the shortcomings in existing instruments, Norway favours a separate process to address the issue of conventional ammunition in a comprehensive manner. We also endorse the draft resolution introduced by France and Germany on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

Fourthly, we must address the matter of certain cluster munitions and other types of ammunition that cause humanitarian problems for civilian populations during and after armed conflict. It is imperative to start working, without further delay, towards an international ban on the types of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable humanitarian problems. We will support the necessary steps to be taken to that end, including a decision by the States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) on a clear negotiation mandate at the upcoming Review Conference. Norway supports Sweden's draft resolution on the CCW.

Fifthly, Norway is a staunch supporter of the Mine Ban Convention. Although the Committee does not address the substance of the Treaty, it makes decisions that provide support for statutory meetings. We commend Australia for biennializing the resolution on the Mine Ban Convention and reiterate that biennialization does not diminish the importance of a resolution.

Mr. Zarka (Israel): Conventional arms control requires particular attention by the international

community in view of the growing amount of civilian casualties and human suffering caused by the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of such weapons. States have the legitimate right to use them to ensure their security and defence. However, conventional arms, when used or even obtained by terrorists or by members of organized crime, can clearly have a destabilizing strategic impact.

Arms, as such, do not pose threats. As aptly phrased many years ago, a sword never kills anybody; it is merely a tool in the killer's hand. At the national level, the need for arms is due in most cases to situations in which States are compelled to defend themselves and secure their territory.

The sad reality in the Middle East combines extensive armaments with the illicit transfer of arms to terrorists with hostile intentions. Terrorism cannot sustain itself without the assistance of States that provide it with support and safe haven. When safe haven is not granted, terrorist organizations seize it. They hide themselves and take up positions among civilians, using innocent men, women and children as human shields as they target civilians with missiles and rockets. As we witnessed in the most recent conflict in our region, the use of such weapons by terrorists has major potential for regional and global destabilization.

In that connection, we stress once again the paramount importance of ensuring full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and, more specifically, of operative paragraph 15 of resolution 1701 (2006). It is now clear to all — or at least to most — that the flow of arms to Hizbollah must be immediately and completely stopped.

A way to ease tensions in the regional context is through mutually agreed upon confidence-building measures aimed at reducing tensions and enhancing regional security and stability. Building trust and confidence in a region will reduce the need for armaments. When nations live together in a spirit of peace and good-neighbourliness, it becomes possible to decrease the number of armaments and to increase transparency.

Transparency in armaments can also reduce tensions. We believe that, in principle, the success of transparency is closely tied to the normalization of political and military relations among neighbours. Israel is convinced that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an important instrument and that its contribution to regional and global stability and security is undoubted. Since the inauguration of that instrument, Israel has responded annually to the Register regarding its seven categories of major battle weapons. We have done so, despite the lack of trust that exists in our region, in the hope of building confidence in our troubled area. We are encouraged by the successful conclusions of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Register, in which my country participated. We hope that that development will encourage others in the region and elsewhere to provide data to that important instrument.

As we have stressed in our general statement, there is a vital need to identify priorities in order to effectively address the real threats to international peace and stability. In that respect, we believe it necessary for the international community to devote greater attention to the threat of the illicit proliferation of conventional weaponry. Arms need to be controlled at the national level, and effective national restraints on transfers must be instituted. That should be achieved by keeping in mind the proper balance between the legitimate security needs of States and the prevention of unnecessary suffering and loss of life.

My Government sees a serious threat to regional and global security and stability in the irresponsible use and transfer of conventional arms. The consequence of the spread of such weapons — or, worse, of their acquisition by terrorist or criminal elements — is invariably the loss of innocent life. It is our opinion that the best way to curb illicit arms proliferation is through strong national commitment and determination. In order to ensure that that goal is pursued and achieved, international legally binding instruments preventing the proliferation of weapons to terrorists should also be developed.

It is our view that States bear the primary responsibility for ensuring that no weapons are transferred from their territory without proper oversight. States must undertake marking and recording procedures for all weapons, rigorous export control, the securing of stockpiles and appropriate national legislation to prevent the misuse and proliferation of arms.

The illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons has affected many societies worldwide, causing suffering primarily to civilian populations. Such transfers exacerbate internal conflicts, thereby

increasing human suffering and threatening peace and security. They not only generate a humanitarian problem, but have also had a considerable economic and social impact at all levels of society.

The United Nations Programme of Action of July 2001 has made a significant contribution to international arms control efforts over the past few years and has made the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons a higher priority. Today, more and more States are aware of the urgent need to implement enhanced standards of control over small arms and light weapons. Surplus small arms and light weapons are being destroyed, and standards related to marking and recordkeeping, as well as to the tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons, are becoming globally accepted.

The United Nations Programme of Action was designed to carry out a significant task, namely, to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The international community mandated the June Review Conference to find effective means to reduce the humanitarian devastation caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Although the Review Conference failed to agree on an outcome document, it reaffirmed the key role of the Programme of Action. Like others, we regret that the Conference was not capable of producing a consensus document.

The outcome of the Conference should encourage the international community to adopt a focused approach identifying concrete measures that can address the illicit aspects of the transfer of small arms and light weapons, rather than trying to regulate the legal and legitimate arms trade. Moreover, the fact that some States chose to divert the focus of the Review Conference to areas remote from the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons could raise serious questions about the effectiveness of the follow-up process.

Israel is ready to continue to explore, with other interested States, ways to identify standards for transfer control that will effectively reduce the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Such standards could include implementation of the marking and tracing instrument, full compliance with Security Council arms embargoes, assessment of the risk of diversion to illicit end-users, a ban on the transfer of Man-Portable Defence Systems (MANPADS) to non-State actors, a ban on transfers to terrorists and satisfactory management and control of stockpiles.

One of the significant achievements of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Register in 2003 was the inclusion of MANPADS as a subcategory under category 7, dealing with missiles. MANPADS were included in the Register as an exception, because that type of weapon system is attractive to terrorist groups, while, on the other hand, it is also a legitimate means of defence for States.

The problem of the illicit proliferation and use of MANPADS encompasses a variety of issues, such as the control and monitoring of that type of weapon, preventing transfers to non-State actors — in particular terrorists — airport security, aircraft protection, scientific cooperation, the collection and destruction of old and surplus missiles, the safeguarding of storage facilities, and technological improvements to prevent unauthorized use.

The threat that those weapons pose to civil aviation is unquestioned. The international community should therefore apply special treatment to the issue of MANPADS. As mentioned earlier, the United Nations Register has already acknowledged MANPADS as a unique type of weapons system by adding it as a subcategory to the reporting requirements. Moreover, the draft resolution on MANPADS introduced in the First Committee by Australia and adopted in the General Assembly as resolution 60/77 underlined the need to apply measures to ensure that these weapons are not directly or indirectly transferred to terrorists or other non-State actors. Moreover, the Wassenaar Arrangement gave due consideration to this threat by adopting, in 2003, Elements for Export Controls of Man-Portable Air Defence Systems, which serve as a solid basis for conducting practical measures to ensure the prevention of their diversion to the wrong hands.

For its part, the Government of Israel has incorporated the Wassenaar guidelines on the transfer of MANPADS into its export control regulations. To our knowledge, Israel is the first — if not the only — non-member State of the Wassenaar Arrangement that has done so, demonstrating that universal application of the Elements is possible and feasible, thus reducing the threat that MANPADS will get into the hands of terrorists.

In addition, as a contribution to the ongoing efforts to address this threat, our Government hosted a

meeting in Jerusalem last April for more than 30 experts from various regions of the world. That experts' meeting underlined, on the one hand, the complexity of the problem, and, on the other, the need to enhance international efforts to address this problem. We intend to continue to work together with other interested States in order to find methods to enhance the implementation of existing international instruments and standards relating to MANPADS and to act to promote the development of other necessary instruments on this issue.

On the question of brokering, Israel welcomes the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts and looks forward to its successful outcome. An Israeli expert will participate in the work of the Group, and we have full confidence that the Group will be able to identify measures to address the problem of unauthorized brokers.

Israel sees in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocol an important tool to reduce human suffering. The realistic spirit and character of the Convention strikes the right balance between the development of new legally-binding norms on the use of weapons in order to reduce unnecessary human suffering on the one hand, and to take into account the legitimate military needs of States on the other.

As a State party to the Convention, Israel has participated actively in the negotiations of Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, and will welcome its entry into force during the Review Conference next month. We attach great importance to that forthcoming meeting. We are of the view that the meeting could adopt a sixth protocol, on mines other than anti-personnel mines, based on the deliberations and negotiations that have taken place in Geneva during the past four years. On the issue of compliance, we hope that the meeting will be able to reach a consensus outcome.

Mr. Tulbure (Moldova): Since this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor in the First Committee during this session, I should like to join previous speakers in sincerely congratulating you, Madam, on your election to serve as Chairperson of the First Committee. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

I would like to take the opportunity offered by this discussion on conventional arms to address the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and to inform the Committee about the actions taken by the Government of the Republic of Moldova regarding small arms and light weapons.

While the international community is trying to eliminate the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons, the problem of small arms and light weapons is consistently on the agenda of international gatherings as a very important issue. Hundreds of thousands of people are killed and injured every year by such weapons. Thus, the stability and security of many countries and entire regions are seriously endangered, and the development and prospects for prosperity are minimized, and even denied, because of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The Moldovan Government is strongly committed to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and is making all necessary efforts in this respect.

The implementation process of the United Nations Programme of Action has reflected efforts by Moldova to control small arms and light weapons proliferation and misuse, both domestically and regionally, as part of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe's Regional Implementation Plan, "Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons", and in the context of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Moldova's positive involvement in the Implementation Plan, which was revised in May 2006, has included full cooperation with the South-Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for Small Arms and Light Weapons. In addition, Moldova has played an important role within the OSCE in agreeing on important initiatives to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, such as the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which sets out criteria to guide decisions by national export control authorities.

At the national level, good progress has been made in terms of revised and improved legislation to cover arms exports, transfers and civilian possession. The stock of weapons that are potentially available for illicit circulation has been continually reduced through the destruction of small arms and light weapons seized

from the civilian population, as demonstrated by the destruction of 1,687 weapons in 2005. Moldova has also achieved a high level of stockpile security, as reflected in the low rate of theft from national stocks. Progress has been made in developing inter-agency coordination on small arms and light weapons issues to enhance the control of such weapons and promote the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. Significant steps have been made to ensure comprehensive planning on this issue through the completion in 2006 of a national small arms and light weapons survey. The survey provides detailed information on the areas in which small arms and light weapons control in the country could be improved, and provides the basis for a future national small arms and light weapons strategy.

The unresolved conflict in the eastern region of Moldova, which is controlled by a separatist regime, remains a serious threat to the political and economic stability of my country and the security of the whole region. The lack of control over the region and its borders strongly limits the Moldovan Government's implementation and enforcement of its commitments to restrain small arms and light weapons proliferation throughout the entire territory of Moldova.

This region remains an area of illegal small arms production and trafficking. Separatist authorities are interested in perpetuating the illegal trade in weapons, as it provides a source of continuous funding for them, and, since 1993, that trade has become one of the most important factors in the economic and military policy of the separatist authorities. The Transdniestrian regime has industrial facilities for the production of light weapons, such as assault rifles, machine guns and multiple and mobile rocket-launching systems, mortars, anti-personnel mines and anti-personnel grenade launchers.

In this connection, I also wish to reiterate our longstanding position that the withdrawal in good faith by the Russian Federation of its troops and armaments, including small arms and light weapons, from the territory of Moldova, in accordance with the OSCE's 1999 Istanbul Summit decision, will decisively facilitate the settlement of the internal conflict and will enhance security and stability, both in Moldova and at the regional level.

The unresolved internal conflict prevents the development and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, including the effective collection, control, storage and destruction of small arms and light weapons in the Transdniestrian region of Moldova. Also, no international monitoring missions are allowed to inspect the illegal facilities for the production of arms, ammunition and other military goods belonging to the separatist entity.

Currently, with the assistance of the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine, which was launched in November 2005, in close cooperation with Ukraine, efforts are being made to secure the Eastern border of the country. We hope that, with the Assistance Mission's help, the control at this border will be restored and the phenomenon of illicit trafficking in all its aspects will be effectively countered.

I would like also to take this opportunity to refer to the ongoing consultations on the draft resolution on the arms trade treaty. As a country confronted with an irreducible internal conflict, foreign troops still stationed illegally on a part of its territory not yet controlled by the central Government, the registration of illegal production and trafficking and the violation of human rights by a separatist entity supported from abroad, Moldova understands and recognizes the value of the arms trade treaty principles proposed by the United Kingdom, Finland and other like-minded countries. In particular, we stand strongly behind those principles that seek to prevent the unlawful transfers of conventional arms and to stem the destabilizing accumulations of small arms and light weapons, which can undermine the international humanitarian order and exacerbate intra-State and regional conflict.

We believe that the development of a framework convention on international arms transfers is not only necessary but also achievable since many of the proposed principles are based on existing State obligations under international law with respect to the international transfer of arms and, therefore, implicitly reflect areas of international consensus. Moreover, national and regional legislation and regulative measures have already been taken to address the matter. The international community thus has in its hands the conceptual tools needed to act more resolutely in tackling this problem as a priority issue.

Keeping in mind that, at the global level, not all States agree to conclude, at this stage, compulsory

instruments regulating various dimensions of the arms trade, including agreements regarding the marking and tracing, brokering and transfer of small arms and light weapons, as well as end-use monitoring, we find reasonable the proposed step-by-step approach in the elaboration of a binding regime under an arms trade treaty.

Mr. Adji (Indonesia): Indonesia reaffirms the validity of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. These weapons have repeatedly proved their capacity to inflict and prolong human suffering and inhibit economic development. This problem is widely shared by Governments and civil society, both within the afflicted areas, as well as in the wider international community. It is disappointing, however, that despite this common view, the 2006 Review Conference was unable to provide a mandate to the General Assembly on follow-up steps for the Programme's further implementation.

My delegation believes that the issue of follow-up is imperative in the efforts of the international community to combat illicit small arms and light weapons. In this regard, my delegation will join efforts by almost all countries to advance the issue of follow-up to the Programme of Action within the context of the United Nations. We are encouraged to see that many countries have also voiced a similar desire. My delegation will again support the omnibus small arms and light weapons draft resolution (A/C.1/61/L.15) put forward this year by South Africa, Japan and Colombia.

My delegation also looks forward to convening next month of the Group of Governmental Experts on brokering activities, in the hope that this meeting will urgently address a serious gap with regard to combating illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

We welcome the process leading to the establishment of a common international standard on the import, export and transfer of conventional arms within the context of the United Nations. My delegation is flexible and does not object to a treaty that will enforce control over the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons, thus preventing their acquisition by irresponsible entities — provided that this does not hamper legitimate transfers between Governments for self-defence and security needs.

Such common international standards should be negotiated multilaterally, and take into consideration the views and concerns of as many States as possible, including those of the developing countries, which are the main importers of such weapons.

We welcome the series of consultations on the draft resolution on the arms trade treaty that were held both in Geneva and in New York, and which resulted in improvements to the draft resolution. We welcome the inclusion of a new operative paragraph that allows the broader United Nations membership to provide their views on this matter. We encourage Member States to make use of this opportunity to express their views.

In order to further ensure total representation on the matter, we believe that not only should the Group of Governmental Experts fulfil the requirement of equitable geographical distribution, but also be fully representative of the widest spectrum of views across the board. In this regard, the role of the Secretary-General in determining participation in the Group of Governmental Experts is crucial for the success of this process.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary General (A/61/261) containing the recommendations from the consensus report of the 2006 Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development. Notwithstanding the many discouraging trends in the field of disarmament, the consensus reached in the Group of Governmental Experts regarding the Register of Conventional Arms represents an island of success.

We are encouraged to see that the Group came up with recommendations to further strengthen the operation of the Register, including an optional standardized form available for Member States to report their small arms and light weapons transfers. We also welcome the reduction of the reporting threshold for warships and submarines from 750 metric tons to 500 metric tons, allowing for greater numbers and types of warships to be included in the Register. These recommendations will further reduce the risk of misunderstanding and miscalculation, and increase confidence and trust among nations.

My delegation believes that the report of the Group has taken another step towards accounting for the needs and concerns of more countries previously not adequately addressed in the Register. It is the

sincere hope of my delegation that the report will contribute to increased participation of States in the Register, as well as maintain the Register's relevance for more countries.

Indonesia was among the first countries to sign the Mine Ban Convention in Ottawa in 1997 and fully shares the values of the Convention to put an end to the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines. The process of ratification was, however, delayed due to the multidimensional crises that beset my country and that have required our collective energy to address them. The political and economic stability that has followed the successful and smooth democratic transition of Government in my country in 2004 has enabled Indonesia to revisit its efforts to ratify the Treaty.

Tardiness in ratifying the Convention does not indicate our lack of commitment to the principles and objectives of the Convention and our commitment towards its universalization. As a non-user and non-producer, as well as a non-affected country, Indonesia fully shares and continues to commit itself to the spirit and purpose of the Convention since its inception. It is in this regard that Indonesia has always been supportive of all resolutions on landmines in the General Assembly since 1996.

As a State signatory of the Convention, Indonesia is well aware of the concerns of States parties regarding the status of Indonesia's ratification process. One month ago, on 11 September 2006, the Government of Indonesia submitted a draft law of ratification to the Parliament for consideration. With this submission, Indonesia is now in the final stage of the ratification process. With this progress, Indonesia is looking forward to playing its part to universalize the values contained in the Mine Ban Treaty.

Organization of work

The Chairperson: We have heard the last speaker for this afternoon's meeting since, as was announced, we have to adjourn by 5 p.m. There are still a number of delegations wishing to make statements and introduce draft resolutions on today's thematic subject. Consequently, it is my intention to provide time on Monday, 16 October, to conclude our thematic discussion on conventional weapons. Afterwards, the Committee shall move on to its thematic discussion on the subjects of other disarmament measures and international security.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.